

HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY! Did you know the first St. Patrick's Day parade was held in the United States? Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City on March 17, 1762.

GAZEBOEXPRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND — MARCH 2011



A PRIMARY QUESTION

UNCONTESTED RACES PROMPT COUNCIL APPEAL TO ELECTION BOARD TO CANCEL MAY PRIMARY AND SAVE TOWN \$32,000

As soon as the election filing period ended in February and members of the Town Council realized there were no contested races in Highland in May, they began questioning whether the town even needed to hold a primary election.

Council President Brian Novak appealed to the Lake County Election Board and its director, Sally LaSota, for a determination.

As of March 1, Lake County election officials were researching the issue and whether communities, such as Highland, where all council members run at-large, hold a unique sort of sway in election law.


Hanging in the balance is \$32,000 in election costs the council believes would be better spent paving a road or on some other worthwhile project in town.

"Because we have no contested races in the primary, we are in a situation where any vote

would have no meaning on an outcome. The place where the votes will count will be in the general election in the fall," Novak said.

"We are looking at this issue from a good government perspective and making the most of every dollar we have. That is especially true during these lean times and ongoing budget uncertainty when we are continually being challenged to do more with less."

Councilman Dan Vassar and his fellow councilmen agreed.

"It's all about being accountable to the residents of Highland," Vassar said. "We consider the resources we do have to be valuable and we don't want to squander any of them. Our hope is that the law will be on our side. That way, we can tell everyone to stay home in May and encourage them to come out in November, when their votes will most definitely count." 

TOWN PETITIONS STATE FOR BLIZZARD FUNDS

Public Works Director John Bach is requesting \$50,000 from the state to offset the cost of last month's storm — a fraction of what the town spent.

So far, the state has said it will pay for ice, but not snow, removal.

"I have turned in only the bills that I can directly attribute to ice removal as have other communities in our area," Bach said. "It's more than a little maddening that the state will pay for ice but won't help to pay for everything we had to do to remove snow."

BELL PARTS & SUPPLY RECEIVES TAX ABATEMENT

Nearly three years after Bell Parts & Supply requested property tax abatement on a building addition and facade improvements, the company has completed the work and received the approvals necessary to take advantage of the tax credit.

The company added six employees as a result of the expansion and salaries have increased by \$110,000. Value of the improvements was nearly \$500,000.

Company President David Bell said the construction has also helped the store increase its online presence and sales.

BURRITOS, NOODLES COMING TO TOWN


Chipotle Mexican Grill and Noodles & Company are planned to anchor one of two available outlots near Indianapolis Boulevard just east of the Meijer grocery store.

The national chains are considered competitors, but have decidedly different cuisines. Denver-based Chipotle — which has 1,000 outlets and is publicly traded — is known for its large, custom burritos featuring natural ingredients.

Noodles & Company has 240 outlets in 20 states and features an Asian-American-Mediterranean-inspired menu. The unifying

ingredient for the privately-held company is the pasta.

Building Commissioner Ken Mika said the developer has been working through the 9,500-square-foot site design and zoning issues over the last several months and is prepared to meet with the Plan Commission at its March public meeting to formally discuss the proposal.

"They are moving along with this project and are hoping to break ground in May," Mika said. "This project will be a nice addition to the south Highland commercial district." 

MARIO TRICOCI ACQUIRES HIGHLAND BEAUTY SCHOOL

Hair styling legend Mario Tricoci has added Creative Beauty Academy to his growing list of schools marketed under the Tricoci University of Beauty Culture brand.

Creative, which has been a fixture in Highland for more than 40 years, is Tricoci's first Indiana acquisition.

Tricoci announced that Debbie Marias, a Creative Beauty Academy graduate who went on to own and operate the school, will continue to manage the Highland campus and serve as a senior manager.

ORDINANCE ON HOLD

A new town law, which would mandate routine inspections on all rental properties, has been put on hold indefinitely while the council does more research on the issue.

The council began considering an ordinance that would provide that all rental properties are maintained.

They have not abandoned the notion, just the timing.

"The interest and input we received from landlords throughout town showed that we were not ready to proceed on this initiative," Councilman Dan Vassar said. "We will continue to perform our due diligence and will discuss it again when we research new issues that have been brought to our attention."

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NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

Send your suggestions to:



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\$100,000 AVAILABLE FOR MAIN STREET FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

The Redevelopment Commission wants to help local businesses in the downtown development district, which commit to improving the exterior of their buildings.

Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro said as part of Highland's Main Street program, there has been \$100,000 set aside to provide grants to local businessowners this year.

"We want to provide financial assistance and can contribute as much as 30 percent of the cost of the facade facelifts," Petro said. "We are looking for substantial improvements that would cost \$10,000 or more."

Grant eligibility will be determined by the newly formed Main Street committee and will be based on design review and approval, construction and the application itself. Priority will be given to buildings located in the Highland Downtown Redevelopment Area. Other projects outside the area may be considered if the Main Street committee believes the building is significant and the improvements would provide a substantial community benefit.

"This is a great opportunity for business owners to improve the value of their properties and let us help pay part of the cost," Petro said. "This is an important component of our overall revitalization plan."

NEW MAIN STREET BUREAU

The Town Council has created a Highland Main Street Bureau, which will be responsible for:

- developing steps to restore, revitalize and promote downtown
- promoting growth, development and stability
- utilizing partnerships to achieve the goals
- preparing and submitting an annual budget

The committee will have at least seven members. First to be named are George VandeWerken of the Highland Economic Development Commission, Councilman Bernie Zemen and Cindy Rivera, representing the Highland Chamber.

Eligible activities include:

- Restoration of original facade
- New facades that meet current design standards
- Cornices, entrances, doors, decorative detail or awnings
- Lighting, signs, window display areas
- Masonry repair
- Painting or cleaning

No project that has already been started will be considered eligible for grant funding.

For more information about the grant process or to obtain an application, contact Petro at (219) 838-1080.

DEVELOPERS EYE FORMER SHAVER LOCATION

More than five years after it was shuttered, Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro said there are at least two parties serious about giving the abandoned Terry Shaver auto dealership new life.

The property, located at 2121 45th Street, includes a 7,000-square-foot showroom and 25,000-square-foot shop and service area on nearly five acres of property.

Nestled between Hampton in Highland and Porte de Leau Condominiums, the long vacant parcel is ideally situated near side-by-side retail developments that skirt the Highland-Munster border. It is one of several large auto dealership properties in town, which have been dormant for several years.

Councilman Dan Vassar said he believes this is another step in the right direction.

"Our goal has been to eliminate vacant buildings. We have had some success but these very large buildings are a big piece of the puzzle," Vassar said. "The Terry Shaver property is located on a major commercial corridor and just two blocks from Indianapolis Boulevard. There is a lot of potential there."

Petro has heard the plans proposed by each developer and is hopeful the sale will go through and the property will be revitalized.

"We are very, very hopeful that this development will take place – and very, very soon," Petro said. "This is something that will be very nice for the town."

HIGHLAND SETS BLIZZARD RECORD

It's official.

At 23.9 inches, Highland has the distinction of receiving the most snow of any community in metro Chicago during February's historic blizzard.

All that snow came with a cost. Public Works Director John Bach said the town could have done without.

Already, \$90,000 in road salt has been spread on roads and streets and the Town Council acted Feb. 28 to appropriate \$30,000 more to the fund.

The money was taken from the town's share of local gaming revenues.

Bach said that figure does not take into account overtime paid to public works employees or fire and police.

"With the weather, there is simply

LOCAL SNOWFALL TOTALS

Highland	23.9"
Schererville	20.4"
Crown Point	19.0"
Hammond	16.2"

SOURCE: National Weather Service

nothing we can do about it," Bach said. "We use salt sparingly during snow because it doesn't really work, but we have gone through what we purchased and potentially icy weather is still in front of us. I just hope we don't have to use all of the \$30,000 for salt this winter so we'll have most of it in reserve for later this year."

EMERGENCY-ALERT SYSTEM KEEPS RESIDENTS INFORMED

In the 14 months since Highland launched its early-alert system, Police Chief Pete Hojnicky said it has proven its worth dozens of times over.

"We have more than 700 residents who receive alerts when we have road closures, weather emergencies and criminal activity," Hojnicky said. "It has never been easier to be in-the-know about up-to-the minute developments — and it's free."

Known as the Nixle Emergency Notification, the system allows residents to create an account that provides secure messaging.

In the event of an emergency, Police Department dispatchers send out pertinent information by text message, email or web — your choice.

HOW TO REGISTER

- Log onto www.nixle.com and click on "Register Now."
- Enter an email address and cell phone number where you would like to receive messages.
- Enter your address or nearby intersection.
- Click "Sign Me Up"

The system has proven so successful, Hojnicky is hoping more and more residents opt in to the program.

"This is the quickest way to keep residents informed," he said. "I would encourage everyone to sign up and see what it's all about. The benefit potential is optimized every time we have new residents sign up."

INDY BRIDGE UPDATE

Despite a 10 percent cut in state highway project funds, the demolition and reconstruction of Highland's Indianapolis Boulevard bridge is still under consideration this year.

Public Works Director John Bach said bids for the project are scheduled to be awarded in early May.

Bach said the plan is to keep one lane open in each direction during the construction.

DEBTS AND CREDITS

In order to balance long-standing debts and credits in the trash collection budget, the Town Council will forgive old debts and return outstanding balances to the state unclaimed property fund.

The total amount due to be forwarded to the state: \$6,153.68, which includes overpayments from about 450 account holders. The amounts range from pennies to nearly \$200 that remained in the accounts when water service was halted or changed owners.

The total amount that is being written off as bad debt: \$2,342.23 from about 150 account holders. Of those, the largest amount that is considered uncollectible is nearly \$500.

Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin said his office spent numerous hours trying to return money to eligible individuals and collect from those who owe. A list of unclaimed property may be found at Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road.

LINCOLN CENTER UPDATE

The snows that blanketed the region in February pushed contractors working on Lincoln Center back, but Parks Superintendent Alex Brown said they are confident they will make up for lost time now that the weather has moderated.

Construction crews continue to work on the interior of the east addition and are expecting to substantially finish work there by the end of May.

CRIME WATCH MEETING

Learn from the experts about identity theft and scams at the next Crime Watch meeting — 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 9 at the Highland library, 2841 Jewett Avenue.

INFO: Call Officer Shawn Anderson at the Police Department, (219) 838-3184.

KIWANIS CHILI COOKOFF

You be the judge! Cast your vote at the first Kiwanis Chili Cookoff. There will be 10 to 15 Chili recipes to sample. Prizes will be awarded for the top three winners. If you're not into celebrating America's favorite bean dish, hot dogs, chips and pop will be available.

WHEN: 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, **March 11**

WHERE: Highland Elk's Lodge • 3120 45th St.

COST: \$5

INFO: Call Tom at (219) 384-0040 for more information or to enter the cookoff.

HIGHLAND BAND CRAFT FAIR

The best in arts and crafts will be showcased at this annual show. The two-day event features jewelry, ceramics, fiber arts and more.

WHEN: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, **March 12** • 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, **March 13**

WHERE: Highland Middle School • 2941 41st St.

INFO: Call (219) 924-9203 or email Frank Postulka at postulka@att.net.

ORGANIC GARDENING

Whether you're just starting out or transitioning from traditional techniques, Master Gardener William Tobin will show you how to use natural organic gardening methods to grow the freshest food.

WHEN: 6:30 p.m. Thursday, **March 17**

WHERE: Highland Public Library • 2841 Jewett

INFO: Call Kathy Deal at (219) 838-2394.

POP WARNER ADULT NIGHT OUT

Join us for Highland Pop Warner's Mardi Gras fund-raiser. You could win one of the many silent auction items: Shedd Aquarium passes, Railcats tickets, an autographed Bears football, gift certificates to local restaurants, assorted gift baskets and more. Pizza, wings, chips, salsa and soft drinks will be served. A cash bar will be available.

WHEN: 7 p.m. to midnight Saturday, **March 19**

WHERE: Rodney's Sports Bar and Grill • 2833 Highway Ave.

TICKETS: \$15 per person • \$30 per couple

INFO: Visit www.highlandpopwarner.com or call Marcie at (219) 808-7684.

BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK

No Health Insurance? High Deductible? Healthchek offers affordable blood work without hidden fees.

WHEN: 9 to 10 a.m. Tuesday, **March 19**

WHERE: Lincoln Center

COST: \$45

NOTE: Fasting recommended, drink lots of water, take medications as directed.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

The public elementary schools will hold kindergarten registration in March. Parents are urged to bring their children and the items listed below to the elementary school that serves their immediate district according to the following schedule:

8:45 to 11 a.m.: All last names beginning with "K" through "Z"

12:15 to 2:30 p.m.: All last names beginning with "A" through "J"

MONDAY, MARCH 7

Johnston Elementary School
8220 Fifth St. • (219) 923-2428

TUESDAY, MARCH 8

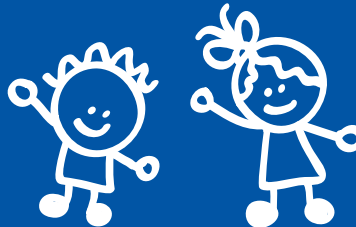
Merkley Elementary School
9340 Fifth St. • (219) 922-5640

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

Southridge Elementary School
9221 Johnston St. • (219) 922-5650

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

Warren Elementary School
2901 100th St. • (219) 922-5660



AGE REQUIREMENT: Students must be 5 years old on or before Aug. 1, 2011.

ITEMS NEEDED TO REGISTER:

1. Five proofs of residency as follows:

- **TWO OF THE FOLLOWING:** NIPSCO, water, phone, cable bills or deposit receipts

- **TWO OF THE FOLLOWING:** Driver's license or state ID showing current address, vehicle registration, recent paycheck or unemployment check receipt

- **ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:** Lease/rent receipt, mortgage and homeowners insurance documents, notarized letter with three proofs of residency from the homeowner. Parent or guardian must provide ID

2. Proof of custody, if applicable

3. Birth certificate

4. Social Security Number

5. Immunization records with name and phone number of pediatrician



COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE

Do you enjoy shopping for rare items such as comic books, sports cards, Hot wheels, autographed memorabilia and other collectibles? Roger Parker from P & P Collectibles will be promoting the card show in conjunction with the Highland Community Garage Sale. Register to sell your household items, toys, books, and more! Concessions will be available.

WHEN: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, **March 19**

WHERE: Lincoln Center

VENDOR FEE: \$26.75 per day for 10' X 10' space. Tables and chairs are not provided.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: March 12

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

ALZHEIMER'S CAREGIVING

Louise Thompson of the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Indiana will present a program for caregivers of Alzheimer's patients.

WHEN: 2 p.m. Wednesday, **March 23**

WHERE: Highland Public Library • 2841 Jewett

INFO: Call Kathy Deal at (219) 838-2394

SPRING CONCERT

Celebrate Spring with joyful tunes at the Highland Community Band's Spring Performance. There is no cost to attend.

WHEN: 7 p.m. Wednesday, **March 29**

WHERE: Monbeck Auditorium at Highland High School • 9135 Erie St.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

EASTER BUNNY TICKETS

Tickets are now on sale for the annual Easter Bunny Breakfast. tickets are limited and must be purchased in advance. Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, the event also features a bike drawing at each seating, basket raffles and photos with the Easter bunny.

DATE: Saturday, **April 16**

SEATINGS: 8:30 or 10 a.m.

LOCATION: Highland High School Cafeteria

FOR TICKETS: Tickets are \$5 and must be purchased in advance at these locations:

CENTIER BANK

9102 and 9701 Indianapolis Blvd.

FIRST MIDWEST BANK

2842 Highway

FIRST FINANCIAL BANK

2611 Highway and 45th & Kennedy

MICHAEL'S RESTAURANT

2040 45th Ave.

LINCOLN CENTER

2450 Lincoln

HIGHLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

8536 Kennedy